

INTL 4300: Comparative Political Institutions Spring 2017

Instructor: Josh Dix

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Office: M 3-4 or by Appt, Candler 329

Course Location: Park 139

Class Time: MWF, 9:05 - 9:55

Course Description

Democracies vary by country. Election processes vary as well; some countries have election campaigns that last for years, and other countries have campaign seasons that last just a month. After the Arab Spring, scholars had hopes that genuine democracy could exist in Egypt. Some countries are wealthy and others are poor.

While these ideas are disconnected, we can make sense of them by understanding the role of institutions. Douglas North tells us that institutions are the rules humans create that both constrain and structure our interactions within society (economic, political, and social). How and why do they work? Where do they come from, and how do they influence us today? This course focuses on economic and political institutions and the consequences that they produce. In the first part of the semester, we will look at the origins of institutions, we will explore differences in democratic institutions. In the second part of the semester, we will look at how non-democratic and hybrid regimes differ from democratic regimes. Third, we will discuss different electoral systems and how they affect voters, parties, and politicians. In the last few weeks of the semester, we will examine the interactions of institutions and the country economies.

Required Books

- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. ISBN: 0307719227
- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Democracies*, 2nd edition. Yale University Press. ISBN: 0300172028
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University. ISBN: 0521405998
- Farrell, David M. 2011. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. New York: Palgrave. Second Edition. ISBN: 9780333801628
- Kamrava, Mehran. 2005. *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*. University of California Press. ISBN: 0520267753

The books are available at the UGA bookstore and Amazon; using an older edition of the books is perfectly acceptable.

Please note that I reserve the right to add articles and news stories to the syllabus as we proceed in the course.

How to do well in this course:

1. Prepare the readings before each class section
2. Be open to new ideas and support the opinions you do have with concrete evidence.
3. If you are having a hard time in class, do not hesitate to come to my office hours or make an appointment with me.
4. Study well!

Course Format

Team-Based Learning

In this course, there will be many in-class activities, all meant to improve collaboration skills, as well as analyzing political institutions from a multitude of angles.

Class Participation

Be ready to participate in class, by discussing the assigned chapters, critically reflecting on the theory, and engaging with your peers. Participation is an essential and mandatory component of this course. I expect you to come to class prepared, to be following the news that is pertinent to our topics, and to attempt to critically reflect on concepts that we are learning in the classroom. You are expected to (A) come to class having read the assigned material and contribute meaningfully to class discussions, (B) follow news pertinent to our topics, and (C) attempt to critically reflect on concepts and problem-sets we encounter. The grade you earn will reflect the amount and quality of your participation as well as your attendance. It should be common sense that you cannot earn a great participation grade if you are not attending class.

Below I defined what reflects different qualities of comments, and provide a table* of what kind of activity earns what grade.

Comment Quality:

- “High”: Comments show reflection about the reading or the discussion at hand, contribution through strong points and/or adding value to the discussion by stating their opinion based on factual knowledge. Students can cite directly from specific articles or book chapters we are studying at the time and/or other works from other courses.
- “Satisfying”: Comments show engagement in class discussion, willingness to “take a guess”, and ability to link previous lecture material to discussions at hand as well as expressing opinions.
- “Low”: Comments show engagement in class discussion, but student never contributes to the added value or demonstrates knowledge from the readings – they are just working for that tick mark.

Participation Grade	Earned if ...
A	Student participates <i>consistently</i> , their comments show that they have read the material beforehand and/or their comment quality is very high, and attends class regularly.
A-	Student participates <i>every other day</i> , their comments show that they have read the material beforehand and/or their comment quality is very high, and attends class regularly.
B+	Student participates; student is clearly following the conversation and providing thoughtful insight.
B	Student participates, but not regularly. Student may be following the conversation, but the contribution is sometimes more opinionated and less rigorous in nature.
B-	Student participates, but not regularly; seems distracted most of the time, opines without support
C	Student never participates but attends class regularly
F	Student never participates because s/he never comes to class

*Please remember that these are only guidelines for grading, not every student case neatly fits into any one category.

**I understand that speaking up in class is difficult for some people. As such, I will offer the option of written weekly assignments on eLC. I will discuss this more in class in the beginning of the semester.

Assessments

Note on Formatting of all written assignments --

All written work should be typed (unless specified) and be formatted as: 12-point Times New Roman, be single-spaced, and have 2"-left margins. Papers should be titled [the more creative, the better]. Papers can be broken up into sections as long as the sections are titled appropriately.

- a. **Participation, Quizzes, and Minor Assignments:** Throughout the semester, there may be quizzes and homeworks based on the material. These will be factored into your participation grade. Have the books and articles read and be ready to discuss in class
- b. **Presentation:** Each student will choose an article/book chapter on the syllabus. The student will present the material to the class, educate the class on the meat of the subject, and lead a discussion (with discussion questions) on the subject chosen. The presentation should be approximately 10 minutes. Discussion questions will be presented after the presentation.
- c. **Comparison Paper:** 2 parts: Part I) Students will write a constitution for a fictitious state of their choosing. In it, they will describe and set up the institutions within their states. Students must structure their constitution with the goal of the system surviving for at least two generations. The constitution is due at the midterm. Part II) Students will do a comparative analysis of two constitutions (the US's and another country). The analysis should focus on the This comparison is due at the final exam. An assignment sheet will be given to prepare students for this project.
- d. **Midterm Exam:** To test your understanding of the material, the final will include: identification terms, matching, short answer, and essay questions. It will cover the material from all sections leading up to the final. The exam is divided into two parts: the written exam and a take-home essay. The essay is due on the day of the exam.
- e. **Final Exam:** The final exam will be held in the same format and with the same requirements. It will not be cumulative.

Participation: 15%
Presentation: 10%
Paper: 25%
Midterm: 20%
Final Exam: 30%

Grade scale:

A	100-93	B	86-83	C	76-73
A-	92-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70
B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D	69-60
				F	Below 60

*****If you have a disability and require reasonable classroom accommodations, please see me after class or make an appointment.*****

Classroom Policies

Attendance and Absences

If you happen to miss class on a day where we have a quiz or an extra credit opportunity, you **must provide proper documentation** addressing the absence. If you plan to/ know you will miss class and have a valid official excuse, please contact me ahead of time and provide me with proper documentation in each and every case.

Grade Appeal

If you feel that a quiz or exam was graded incorrectly, send a **written appeal** to me within two days after the returned assignment.

eLearning Commons Use

Assignments, articles, announcements, and grades can be reached at eLearning Commons (<http://elc.uga.edu/>). Please check the eLC at least once a day for updates of any kind.

Academic Honesty

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Please contact me any time you have questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy.

Reading list can be found in spreadsheet on course folder.